

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



9 February 2016

Ms Hayley Clacy
Headteacher
Manor Croft Academy
Old Bank Road
Dewsbury
West Yorkshire
WF12 7DW

Dear Ms Clacy

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Manor Croft Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 28 January 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in July 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the trustees are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement, identified at the recent section 5 inspection, in order to become a good academy.

The academy should take further action to:

- ensure that the quality of pupils' learning and progress is given the highest priority when leaders are checking the improvements to the quality of teaching and learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, middle leaders, representatives of School Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA), which is the single multi-academy sponsor, members of the governing body and the academy improvement partner to discuss the actions taken since the section 5 inspection in July 2015. The academy's development plans, English and mathematics leaders'

summary reports on progress since the last inspection and the academy's system for checking pupils' progress were evaluated. Other documents were scrutinised, including minutes of the governing body meetings, attendance data and the academy's monitoring information. I also conducted a scrutiny of a sample of pupils' mathematics, English, history and geography workbooks.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, two assistant principals have left and have been replaced internally. A new interim director for mathematics has been appointed and a new director of English has taken up post. An existing member of staff has been appointed to the role of Special Educational Needs coordinator. Two teachers and a learning support assistant have joined the academy, while four teachers and one learning support assistant have left.

Main findings

There is a strong desire from senior and middle leaders, SPTA and governors to ensure that improvements are made swiftly and with maximum impact. There is a sense of urgency to address the areas of concern and they are being prioritised effectively.

Senior leaders have a very clear view of what needs to improve and have identified in the academy's development plan how this can be done. Recent monitoring of the development plan shows that actions are being evaluated and further refinements are being made to ensure no opportunities for improvement are missed. In addition to this, middle leaders in the academy articulate very clearly the impact of their actions to drive improvement, and are acutely aware of the next steps to heighten the impact of their work on pupils' progress. Middle leaders have benefited from a very comprehensive programme of support, mentoring and coaching from senior leaders so that they have the skills to fulfil their roles well.

There has been a positive culture change across the academy under the direction of you and your vice-principal, which has enabled staff to be developed as practitioners in a very supportive way, while being held firmly to account for the performance of their pupils. A robust system to check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, in which all leaders are involved, results in high-quality, bespoke professional development packages, which are starting to have an impact on standards. The academy's focused and timely quality assurance procedures ensure that teachers' expectations of all pupils and of themselves have been heightened and are becoming more consistent. However, while leaders check meticulously on all aspects of teachers' practice, at times leaders' monitoring fails to prioritise the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. This needs to be the key measure of the success of teaching.

Recent improvements in both English and mathematics have resulted in standards starting to rise. Across both subjects, an initial audit from leaders established what worked well previously and what needed to improve. In-depth question-level

analysis of pupils' work and assessments now means that teachers are able to plan the precise next steps in their pupils' learning. Because of this, teaching is now moving learning on at a much faster pace. Professional development opportunities for teachers to improve their practice have included a focus on challenge for the most-able learners and the quality of support for those pupils who need additional help. There are opportunities for teachers to observe good practice across the academy and this is making a positive difference to teachers' skills and knowledge across the academy. The approach to providing written feedback to pupils is now being used more consistently, and is beginning to impact on their achievement in lessons. The use of 'SPA' marking – strength, problem and action – enables pupils to practise skills that they may need further help with, or challenge and deepen their understanding and learning.

The leadership and management of pupils' attendance is very sharp and has been refined considerably since the previous inspection. As a result of a very clear analysis and tracking of pupils' attendance across every year group, attendance issues are being tackled with good effect. Attendance has started to rise across all year groups and for different groups of pupils over time. Pupils are rewarded for good attendance on a weekly basis to ensure that they can achieve success despite having had poorer attendance previously. In addition to this, regular meetings are held between the leader for attendance and the leaders for teaching and learning, to share information and plan additional support and challenge for those pupils who need it.

External support

The academy has been supported well by the use of SPTA's core team to ensure that improvements in mathematics and English develop at a fast pace, despite the staffing difficulties that the academy has been dealing with. Extensive support from the trust's English and mathematics advisers has ensured that those departments have turned a corner on their academy improvement journey. Furthermore, SPTA have supported and mentored key members of the leadership team to develop and enhance their skills in order to carry out their roles effectively.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of SPTA, and the Regional Schools Commissioner. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Lithgow
Her Majesty's Inspector